

CHAPTER 3:  
THE BIRD EXPERT

# 鳥 師



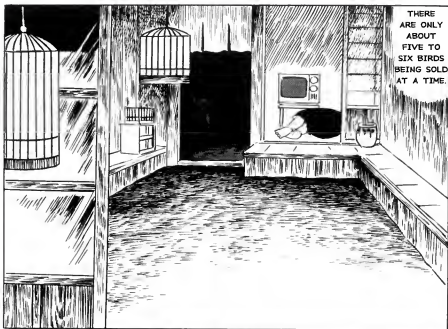
IT SITS SAFELY  
OUT OF SIGHT,  
ON A ROAD  
BARELY EVER  
USED BY  
ANYONE.

IT'S A VERY  
GLOOMY  
STORE.

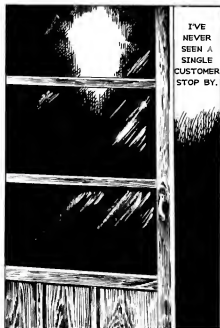


THERE IS A SIGN  
IN THE WINDOW SAYING  
"MIST NETS\* HERE",  
EVEN THOUGH THEY  
WERE OUTLAWED YEARS  
AGO, AND NO ONE WOULD  
EVER REALLY WANT  
ONE ANYWAY.

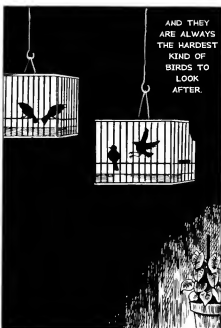
\*A TYPE OF NET USED FOR CATCHING WILD BIRDS



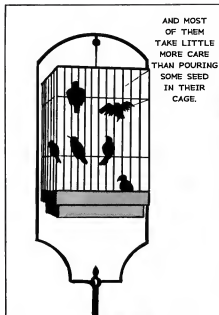
THERE  
ARE ONLY  
ABOUT  
FIVE TO  
SIX BIRDS  
BEING SOLD  
AT A TIME.



I'VE  
NEVER  
SEEN A  
SINGLE  
CUSTOMER  
STOP BY.



AND THEY  
ARE ALWAYS  
THE HARDEST  
KIND OF  
BIRDS TO  
LOOK  
AFTER.



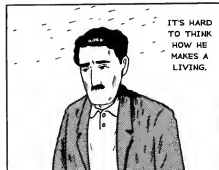
AND MOST  
OF THEM  
TAKE LITTLE  
MORE CARE  
THAN POURING  
SOME SEED  
IN THEIR  
CAGE.



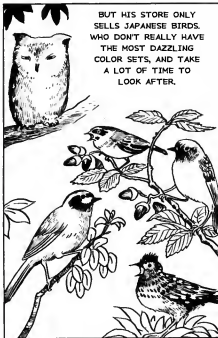
RECENTLY, BIRDS  
FROM ABROAD ARE  
THE BIG SELLERS.  
PARAKEETS, PARROTS...  
ANYTHING WITH  
LOTS OF COLOR.



THE  
GOVERN-  
MENT HAS  
LAWS THAT  
LIMIT  
WHAT  
JAPANESE  
BIRDS CAN  
BE SOLD  
AS WELL.



IT'S HARD  
TO THINK  
HOW HE  
MAKES A  
LIVING.



BUT HIS STORE ONLY  
SELLS JAPANESE BIRDS.  
WHO DON'T REALLY HAVE  
THE MOST DAZZLING  
COLOR SETS, AND TAKE  
A LOT OF TIME TO  
LOOK AFTER.



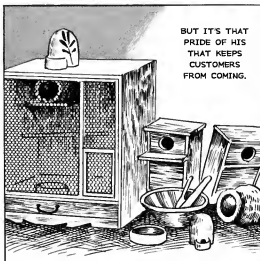
"JAPANESE WHITE-EYE"



NO... MAYBE  
EVEN 200,000!  
HEHEH.



THINK I MIGHT  
BE ABLE TO  
MAKE 100,000  
OFF OF IT.



BUT IT'S THAT  
PRIDE OF HIS  
THAT KEEPS  
CUSTOMERS  
FROM COMING.

TAKING A BIRD THAT  
USUALLY GOES FOR 4,500  
AND RAISING IT TO GO  
FOR THAT MUCH IS  
AN IMPRESSIVE SKILL.



BUT MOST  
OF THE EXPERTS  
ARE MORE  
INTERESTED IN  
WESTERN  
BIRDS  
NOWADAYS,  
AREN'T THEY?



THEY SAW THE  
VALUE IN  
JAPANESE  
BIRDS.



THE EXPERTS  
FROM A  
LONG TIME  
BACK KNEW  
WHAT THEY  
WERE  
TALKING  
ABOUT.

THOSE  
BIRDS ARE  
NOTHING  
BUT TOYS  
FOR MOMS  
AND THEIR  
KIDS.

THOSE  
FLAMBOYANT  
SHOWBOAT  
BIRDS? DON'T EVEN  
GET ME  
STARTED.

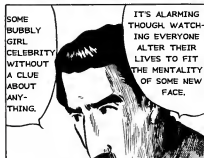
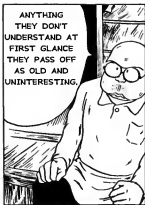


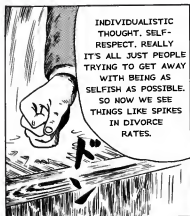
THEY'D  
BRIGHTEN  
THE PLACE  
UP. I'M SURE  
THEY'D DRAW  
CUSTOMERS  
TOO.



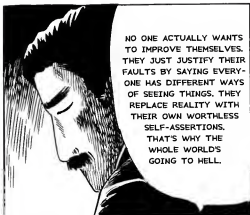
YOU NEED  
TO STOP ALL  
THIS BLACK  
MARKET BIRD  
BUSINESS  
AND OPEN UP  
A PLACE WITH  
SOME PARA-  
KEETS.







INDIVIDUALISTIC  
THOUGHT. SELF-  
RESPECT. REALLY  
IT'S ALL JUST PEOPLE  
TRYING TO GET AWAY  
WITH BEING AS  
SELFISH AS POSSIBLE.  
SO NOW WE SEE  
THINGS LIKE SPIKES  
IN DIVORCE  
RATES.



NO ONE ACTUALLY WANTS  
TO IMPROVE THEMSELVES.  
THEY JUST JUSTIFY THEIR  
FAULTS BY SAYING EVERY-  
ONE HAS DIFFERENT WAYS  
OF SEEING THINGS. THEY  
REPLACE REALITY WITH  
THEIR OWN WORTHLESS  
SELF-ASSERTIONS.  
THAT'S WHY THE  
WHOLE WORLD'S  
GOING TO HELL.



OPPORTUNITY  
COMES FROM  
HUMILITY.



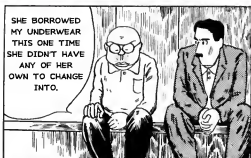
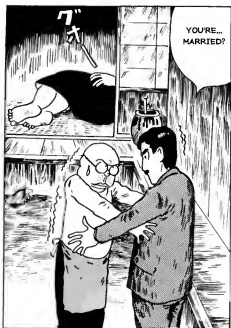
(...DID HE  
JUST SAY  
THE  
D-WORD...?)



(FART)



THE INFINITE  
DEPTH FOUND  
IN THE WAYS  
OF EASTERN  
THOUGHT IS THE  
ONLY OPTION  
AVAILABLE FOR  
THE SALVATION  
OF HUMANITY.



BUT SHE  
DIDN'T  
COME BACK.

WIFE SAID  
SHE WAS  
HEADING  
TO CHECK  
IT OUT.



THREE DAYS  
LATER, THERE  
WAS NEWS  
OF A FIRE  
OVER AT  
DOWNTOWN  
TSURUKAWA.



I SEARCHED  
ALL OVER  
FOR HER.  
WENT TO HER  
PARENT'S  
HOUSE, HER  
RELATIVES...



BUT THE TRACKS ARE ONLY OPEN  
6 DAYS A MONTH, SO, SHE ONLY  
REALLY WORKED 12 DAYS AND MADE  
ABOUT JUST 80,000 YEN.



SHE WAS WORKING  
AT TWO BIKE RACE  
TRACKS BEFORE SHE  
DISAPPEARED.



THEN ONE DAY I WENT  
THERE TO SEE A RACE.  
AND GUESS WHO I FOUND.



BUT NEITHER PLACE  
SAID THEY'D HEARD  
FROM HER RECENTLY.

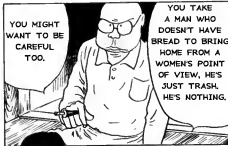
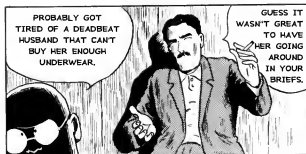
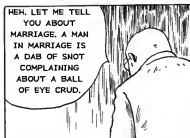
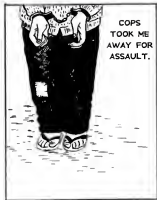
I WENT  
TO ASK  
ABOUT  
HER.

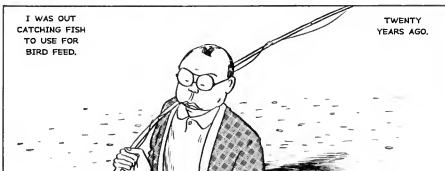
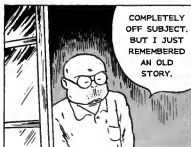


I DON'T KNOW  
WHO THIS PERSON  
IS. I'VE NEVER  
SEEN HIM BEFORE.



I WAS MAD  
AT HER.  
CLOCKED  
HER PRETTY  
HARD 'TIL  
A GUARD  
CAME AND  
STOPPED  
ME.



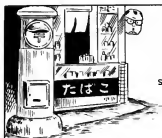




I SAW THIS  
HUGE BIRD  
PERCHED ON  
A TRASH CAN  
OUTSIDE THE  
STATION.

SITTING  
DOWN, EATING  
LUNCH.

LOOKING  
CLOSER  
I REALIZED  
IT WAS  
JUST SOME  
GUY.



LOOKED  
LIKE IT  
COULD'VE  
BEEN A  
GIANT  
EAGLE OR  
SOMETHING.

IT WAS  
CREEPING  
ME OUT A  
GOOD BIT,  
BUT...



I THOUGHT HE MIGHT'VE BEEN HOMELESS, BUT HIS LUNCH WAS IN ITS OWN CASE... PROBABLY HAD SOME MONEY, I GUESS.



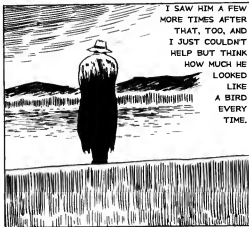
IT WAS STRANGE THOUGH, HE REALLY LOOKED JUST LIKE A BIRD THERE.



BUT IF THAT WAS THE CASE, WHY, WHEN THERE ARE PARKS WITH PLENTY OF BENCHES NEARBY, WAS HE PERCHED ON A TRASH CAN EATING LIKE A BIRD?



I SAW HIM A FEW MORE TIMES AFTER THAT, TOO, AND I JUST COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK HOW MUCH HE LOOKED LIKE A BIRD EVERY TIME.





WITH BIRDS  
TO SELL.



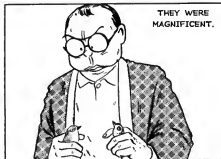
ONE DAY,  
HE  
FINALLY  
SHOWED  
UP AT  
MY  
STORE.



AND HE DIDN'T  
BRING THEM  
IN CAGES.  
THEY WERE  
ALL JUST  
RESTING  
ON HIS  
ARM.



I PAID  
A LOT.  
DIDN'T  
EVEN  
THINK  
ABOUT  
IT.



THEY WERE  
MAGNIFICENT.



YOU CAN'T  
JUST RAISE  
BIRDS LIKE  
THE ONES HE  
HAD, NOT  
UNLESS YOU  
REALLY KNOW  
YOUR  
STUFF.

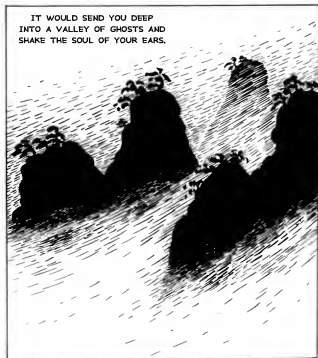


THE MEJIRO  
ISN'T REALLY  
THOUGHT OF  
AS A RARE BIRD,  
BUT THE GOOD  
ONES ARE HARD  
TO FIND.



SOMETIMES  
YOU CAN RAISE  
100 EGGS  
AND HAVE NOT A  
SINGLE ONE  
TURN OUT GOOD.

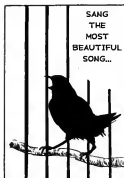
AND EVEN IF  
YOU'RE A GOOD  
BREEDER, YOU  
CAN'T EXPECT  
EVERY BIRD YOU  
RAISE TO TURN  
OUT PERFECT.



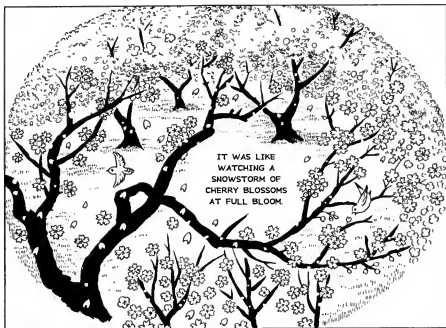
IT WOULD SEND YOU DEEP  
INTO A VALLEY OF GHOSTS AND  
SHAKE THE SOUL OF YOUR EARS.



BUT THE  
MEJIRO HE  
BROUGHT  
BY...



SANG  
THE  
MOST  
BEAUTIFUL  
SONG...



IT WAS LIKE  
WATCHING A  
SNOWSTORM OF  
CHERRY BLOSSOMS  
AT FULL BLOOM.



HIS BIRD-  
CATCHING  
SKILLS HAD  
TO BE SEEN  
TO BE  
BELIEVED.



AFTERWARDS,  
THE MAN BROUGHT BY  
NIGHTINGALES AND  
SKYLARKS AS WELL.

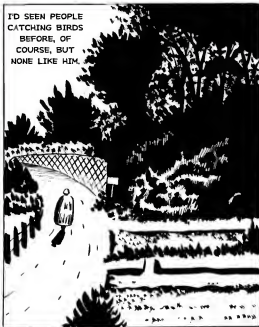


BACK AT THAT  
TIME, THIS  
PLACE WASN'T  
AS DEVELOPED  
AS IT IS NOW.  
WILD BIRDS  
WERE EVERY-  
WHERE.

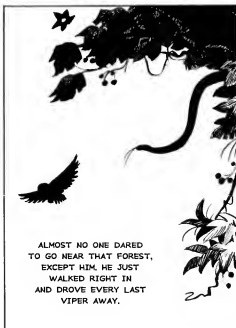
HE DIDN'T  
USE ANY  
TRAPS. ALL HE  
HAD TO DO  
WAS WHISTLE  
AND THE BIRDS  
WOULD COME  
TO HIM.



I'D SEEN PEOPLE  
CATCHING BIRDS  
BEFORE, OF  
COURSE, BUT  
NONE LIKE HIM.

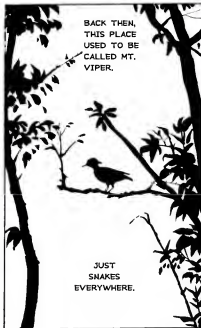


ALMOST NO ONE DARED  
TO GO NEAR THAT FOREST,  
EXCEPT HIM. HE JUST  
WALKED RIGHT IN  
AND DROVE EVERY LAST  
VIPER AWAY.



BACK THEN,  
THIS PLACE  
USED TO BE  
CALLED MT.  
VIPER.

JUST  
SNAKES  
EVERYWHERE.





ALL HIS FINGERS COULD BEND 90 DEGREES AT THE FIRST JOINT.



AND HIS HANDS... THEY WERE LIKE BIRD HANDS.

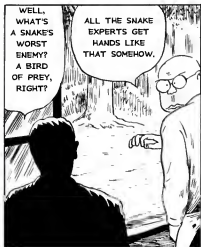


BIRD HANDS?



THIS IS ALL VERY STRANGE.

THE THING IS... IT'S ALMOST AS IF BIRDS WANTED TO GO TO THAT HAND OF HIS.



WELL, WHAT'S A SNAKE'S WORST ENEMY? A BIRD OF PREY, RIGHT?

ALL THE SNAKE EXPERTS GET HANDS LIKE THAT SOMEHOW.



I HAVE, ACTUALLY.

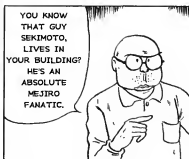
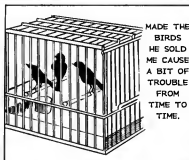
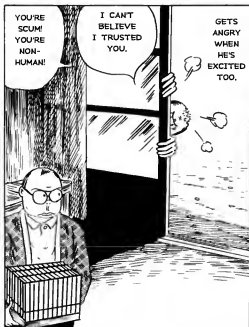
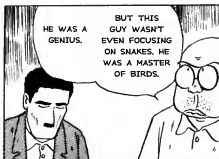
YOU EVER HEARD OF KUDOU THE SNAKE SELLER?

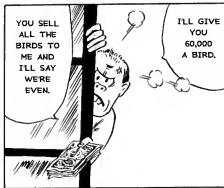
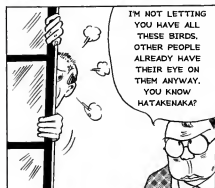
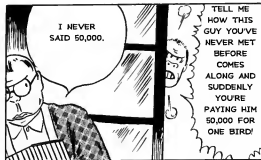
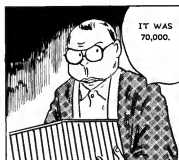
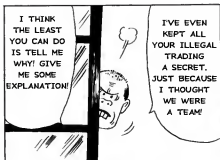


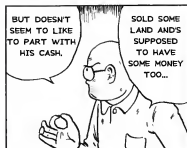
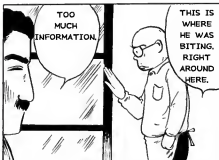
HIS HANDS LOOKED LIKE THIS.

HE DOES ANTIQUES NOW, BUT HE USED TO BE A SNAKE EXPERT.

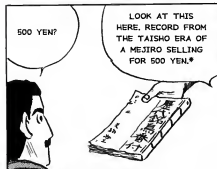
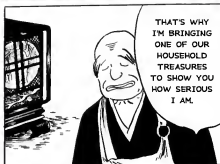
*\*NOT SO SURPRISINGLY, THIS GUY, THE SNAKE MOUNTAIN, AND SO ON ALL SEEM TO BE BASED ON TSUGE'S REAL PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.*



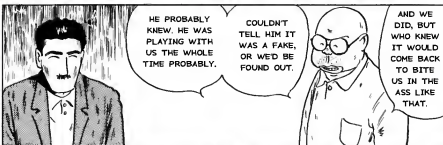
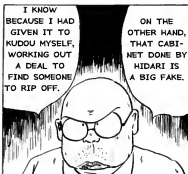


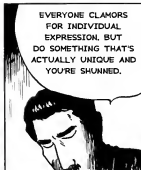
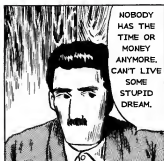


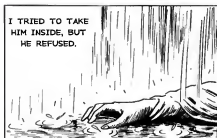
THE GLASSES GUY IS MAKING  
THE SYMBOL FOR MONEY.



*\*I'M GUESSING THE POINT IS THIS WAS AN EXORBITANT PRICE AT THE TIME.*

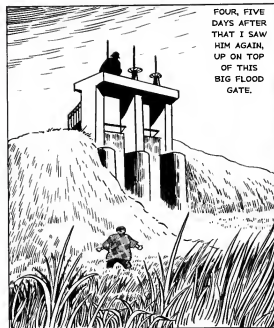








HE WANTED TO  
SELL ME THIS BIG  
WHITE HERON, BUT  
I'VE NEVER TAKEN  
CARE OF A BIRD  
THAT SIZE BEFORE.  
I HAD TO REFUSE.



FOUR, FIVE  
DAYS AFTER  
THAT I SAW  
HIM AGAIN,  
UP ON TOP  
OF THIS  
BIG FLOOD  
GATE.



